United Nations E/CN.18/2009/13/Add.5

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 January 2009

Original: English

United Nations Forum on Forests
Eighth session
New York, 20 April-1 May 2009
Item 7 of the provisional agenda*
Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Discussion paper contributed by the farmers and small forest landowners Major Group

Summary

Large parts of the world's forests are managed by forest owners and community forestry. Most of the properties and managed areas are small or medium-sized. Family forestry and community forestry work to secure sustainable forest development. The organization of forest owners and community forestry is vital to enabling the small and medium-sized properties to be economically viable and carefully managed and to providing an essential contribution to local livelihood. The importance of forest owners' organizations and the economic cooperation among family and community foresters needs to be recognized and supported. Together with secure property and land tenure rights, organizations controlled by the active foresters themselves are a prerequisite for sustainable management in a changing environment concerned with forests and biodiversity. The foresters must be enabled to organize themselves and to avoid "being organized" by others. Reciprocal cooperation with industry, State forests and Governments is vital, however, and in the common interest.

* E/CN.18/2009/1.

09-22014 (E) 120209

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I. Introduction

1. Large parts of the world's forest are managed by family forestry, personal forest owners and community forestry. The exact numbers are not known, but in many parts of the world 60 per cent or more of the area and forest volume are managed by small owners and communities. Family forest owners share the same values and visions and the same long-term commitment and combine utilizing the resources with maintaining the diverse functions of the forest. Economic, ecologic and social considerations are inherited through generations and reflect the local dependence on the economic and protective functions of forests. This is the hallmark of true sustainable forestry.

2. The people responsible for the daily activities within forests need to be taken into account and directly involved in international forest policy discussions. Very often, international processes are dominated by those who talk about forests, not those who practise forestry. The active foresters need to be "talked with" and not only "talked to" or "talked about".

3. The only way to manage sustainably the vast majority of small properties is by organizing them through their interests and their practical and economic activities and securing a global voice for the organizations concerned. The organizations must be able to ensure effective economic activity, providing support to the foresters through implementing education and knowledge transfer and advocating their interests in local and international arenas.

4. Local network and communities are strong forces when they constitute the foundation of their own organizations. The prerequisite, however, is that these organizations be controlled by the foresters themselves and not some outside forces organizing the forest owners. On the other hand, economic cooperation with industry and cooperation with State forests and Governments are highly important in respect of forming, developing and maintaining the organizations. The building of strong organizations for forest owners and community forestry will be in the best interest of industry, State forests and Governments. This is the only way to ensure sustainable forest management and efficient and responsible forestry covering large areas of smallholdings.

5. It is also important to recognize international contexts — the different conditions under which forestry is conducted all over the world. If some parts of the world face serious threats of deforestation, others, for example, Europe and North America, are confronted with the problem of underutilization of forests as a renewable resource. If some parts of the world lack forest owners' organizations, other parts have highly functional organizations and economic cooperatives. An important challenge for the international discussion is to recognize the variety of conditions and build on the mix of contributions from all types of forest owners' organizations. We know that the strongest forest owners' organizations are those with members of different sizes, including small and medium-sized forest owners, who cooperatively share their economic and political strengths.

II. Forests in a changing environment

6. Sustainable forest management is the best way of securing the existence of robust forests in a changing environment. It is important to remember that

consideration of the three components of sustainable forestry — economic, ecologic and social — requires the achievement of a balance. The main forces that contribute to sustainable development will also prepare the forest for changes and may activate forces that combat negative development, promote adaptation to the actual situation and utilize the possibilities for change. This is only possible under conditions of well-organized forestry.

7. An important part of achieving sustainable forest management is the availability of cost-effective and affordable group forest certification to well-organized small and medium-sized forest owners' and community forest organizations. This has proved highly effective in some countries already.

A. Forests and climate change

8. The effects of climate change are very important and the forest must be regarded not only as part of the problem, but also as an important part of the solution. The long-term positive effects of active forestry, the growth of renewables and the use of environmentally friendly forest products must be stimulated. This must include support for and recognition of the important roles of forest organizations in the mitigation of climate change. The substitution effect of forest products and the promotion of wood could also be channelled through the organizations.

B. Reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation and combating desertification

9. The problems of loss of forest cover and the prevention of forest degradation are often caused by poverty and forces operating outside the forest sector. Short-term solutions, involving buying off the "symptoms" of forest loss and degradation, may be found. The long-term solution, however, is to build sustainable forest management and ensure that forest management depends on local people by building the capacity of family and community forestry through the securing of property rights and land tenure rights and fostering long-term viable forestry. Once again, the formation and development of forest organizations constitute a key instrument in achieving these goals. Without proper organizations, the support for local forestry is not possible in the long term.

C. Forests and biodiversity conservation, including protected areas

10. Forest and biodiversity conservation is an important part of sustainable forest management. In promoting sustainable management, family and community forestry also achieves forest and biodiversity conservation. This phenomenon might include protected areas. On the other hand, the protection of areas must take into consideration the elements of a viable economy, local livelihoods and social considerations. The restrictions and compensations must be discussed with family forestry and community forestry organizations as equal partners.

III. Means of implementation for sustainable forest management

11. Though their role and the benefits accruing from their operation, forest owner associations and cooperatives are instrumental in building capacity and enabling local communities and the small and medium-sized forest owners to fulfil the goals linked to securing sustainable forest management. The means of implementation must build on the work of existing organizations and local networks and communities. Existing organizations operating in parts of the world where economic cooperation is strong today must enter into a dialogue in order that knowledge and experience may be shared. It is also vital to utilize local knowledge and experience in combination with scientific knowledge and modern principles of organization and technology.

12. Industry must be given a role in, and responsibility for, supporting forest owners' organizations in the management and effective collection of harvest from smallholding areas. State forest must be obliged to support private forestry and its organizations so as to secure the mutual benefit of sustainable management in larger areas. Industry must behave in a way that is supportive of the efforts of small, medium-sized and large landowners to join the same organizations and must promote wood procurement through such organizations, which, in the medium term, will deliver the most cost-effective and stable wood supply built on sustainable management of larger areas than those of today.

13. Central, regional and local governments must take on the responsibility for supporting the foresters' formation of their own organizations and must enable them to grow, counsel their members and build educational capacity.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

14. **The support of sustainable forest management is the key to securing forests in a changing environment. Sustainable forest management will generate lasting solutions.**

15. **The key to sustainable forest management in areas with small and medium-sized forest holdings is to support the formation and development of forest owners' and community forest organizations. Industry, State forest and Governments have special roles and responsibilities.**

16. **Forest certification connected to effective group certification in forest owners' and community forest organizations should be supported as a tool for securing and documenting sustainable forest management.**

17. **The international community must encourage existing forest owners' organizations to enter into a true dialogue. Intergovernmental organizations must recognize the need to "talk with" and not "talk to" or "talk about" the real actors in today's forestry. In international consultations, the input of representatives of active forestry must be given more weight than advice given to international organizations by those without responsibility or an active engagement.**